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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE GROUP
INTELLIGENCE REPORT

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SUBJECT Petition by Slovene DP's

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SUPPLEMENT

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The following petition was submitted by the Slovene displaced persons in the British Zones of Germany and Austria.

14 September 1947

Excellency, the Slovene DP's in the British Zone of Occupation in Germany and Austria take the liberty to appeal to you in the following matter:

On Monday, 8th September 1947 an agreement was signed at Bled, Yugoslavia by Lieutenant-General Sir James Steele, Commander-in-Chief British Troops and High Commissioner in Austria, and Marshal Tito regarding the repatriation of Yugoslav DP's living in the British Zone of Occupation in Germany and Austria - whereby a special British-Yugoslav Commission should be established with the purpose of examining the case of any single Yugoslav DP in order to ascertain whether he was a criminal, collaborator or quisling. Following the announcement released in newspapers, the Yugoslav Government has been authorized on the basis of the Agreement to have the opportunity of submitting to the British Government within two months after the Agreement came to force a list of eventual subsequently proved war criminals, collaborators or quislings. The agreement says further that those Yugoslav DP's who are not willing to be repatriated to Yugoslavia will be transferred to the camps in the British Zone of Germany. In addition, the newspapers are stating that the Yugoslav Government will proclaim a new amnesty for Yugoslav DP's. The Agreement came into force immediately after the signing.

In connection with the signature on this Agreement between the British and Yugoslav Governments the Slovene DP's living in the British Zone of Germany and Austria are addressing you, Excellency, who are well known all around the world as a resolute protector of the human rights of all, in particular of those who are most in need.

In order to make it clear that our memorandum has no intention of defending war criminals, collaborators and quislings, we declare solemnly that we are supporting without any reservation the idea that a just punishment should be imposed upon all the war criminals regardless of their nationality or political convictions.

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CLASSIFICATION [REDACTED]

This document is hereby regraded to CONFIDENTIAL in accordance with the letter of 16 October 1978 from the Director of Central Intelligence to the Archivist of the United States.
Next Review Date: 2008

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NO CHANGE in Class. ☐

DECLASSIFIED ☐

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As to the Yugoslav Government it is known that a year ago two or three lists of war criminals, collaborators and quislings were submitted to the British and United States authorities. Insofar as the alleged persons were within reach of the British and United States authorities and their guilt was legally proved, they were handed over to the Yugoslav Government. On the other hand you no doubt know, Excellency, that the British as well as the United States occupying authorities in Germany and Austria have repeatedly screened every single Yugoslav DP who lives in their occupation sphere.

The Slovene DPs, Excellency, wish to draw your attention to the fact that the Yugoslav Communists, especially this last time, try to allege that all those who have proved themselves supporters of Western Democracy are war criminals, collaborators or quislings. In this connection let us remind you of the recent trial of Professor of University Dr. Boris Furlan held before the Tribunal at Ljubljana. Dr. Furlan was during the war a member of the Yugoslav Exile Government in London and as such fully supported the Partisans' actions in the homeland, particularly after the Agreement Subasic-Tito. He returned to Yugoslavia after the German capitulation. He was sentenced to death after he was charged with having steadily demonstrated his Anglo-American political orientation. We, however, know very well that the present Government in Yugoslavia is looking intensively just at the present time for all those Slovene DPs living in the British Zone of Germany and Austria who are partisans of the Western Democracy. It is a fact that everybody with such an orientation is considered a spy in present-day Yugoslavia.

We feel it our duty to inform you that the Yugoslav DPs living in British Zone of Germany and Austria have been seized by a terrific fear (and we believe there is a justified reason for it) that the Yugoslav authorities may claim the extradition of all those who dared during the war and now as refugees to demonstrate openly their pro-West feeling and sympathies. The Yugoslav Government may impose upon them at least the collaboration if not the war crimes charges).

We do bear in our minds how the British Government declared on various occasions through their representatives that they would defend and safeguard human rights against all, and especially that they would protect all the DPs who have taken refuge with them for political reasons. Let us quote for instance the declaration given by Field-Marshal Alexander to the Yugoslav DPs at Viktring in Carinthia in June 1945 and the statement given to the DP students at Graz University by Lieutenant-General Sir James Steele in July 1947.

The Yugoslav DPs in British Zone of Germany and Austria have the impression, in view of the recent Bled Agreement, that the British Government has left us at the discretion of the Yugoslav Communists who would like to deprive us of our life under the imaginary guilt of war crimes.

The Yugoslav DPs have experienced, alas, how the Yugoslav Government designated to the British occupation authorities as war criminals, collaborators or quislings all the DPs who took active part in the positive work for their country-fellows. For instance, in the DP camp Spittal in Austria, which is under UNRRA Administration, 20 Slovene cultural workers have been discharged from the positions which they occupied in the camp with approval of the British authorities. None of them, however, was during the war a collaborator, etc. On the contrary, some of them were in the enemy's concentration camps and occupier's prison due to their pro-Western political conviction. The fear which has now seized Yugoslav DPs is evidently justified.

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The panic among the Yugoslav DPs after the British-Yugoslav Agreement at Bled has been caused also by the following fact: In the Yugoslav DP camps in British Zone of Germany and Austria there has been recently or is at the present time a special British Commission which is screening individual Yugoslav DPs with regard to their political activities during the war. The Yugoslav DPs have spoken the truth frankly and now they fear that these records, compiled by the British Commission, might come to the hands of the Yugoslav authorities who could make out exactly how this or that person from among us worked during the war for the Western Allies, with the possible consequence that he will be brought before a Yugoslav political Tribunal as a war criminal.

As to the prospective amnesty which has been promised at Bled, the Yugoslav DPs regret to have to tell you, Excellency, that we take no account of it because of the bad experiences we had in this respect. In spite of several amnesties many Yugoslav DPs who returned home were put before People's Tribunal. The others, and the latter were more numerous, have been "liquidated" secretly-if we use the technical terms of the Communist jurisdiction. There are some DPs among us who were in the Communist jail in Yugoslavia together with some prisoners who had possession of the Amnesty Decrees who were killed though having in their pockets the promise of amnesty. You will understand after this that we consider the prospective amnesty a bare political lure like the former amnesties.

Before ending this memorandum let us make two observations: The Yugoslav Government believes anyone of us who stayed in the camp two years and more to be 'poisoned' already by the Western Democracy and therefore dangerous to them. And secondly, an open question. Can the honest public imagine that the persons who have been living in DP Camps for two years and more under their right name could have a bad conscience? Definitely not!

With regard to the above the Slovene DPs living in British Zone of Germany and Austria address to you, Excellency, a request to kindly intercede in our favor to the competent authorities to ask that the British authorities in Germany and Austria follow the Allies' resolutions in respect of human rights, and that they would not disavow the solemn declarations referring to this matter and given by their great men.

It is true that two days after the signing of the Bled Agreement the Commandants of the camps of the British Zone of Austria published an announcement by the British Government whereby the camp inmates were told that the reports in the newspapers were not correct and that nobody would be compulsory repatriated. In spite of this statement the Yugoslav DPs are convinced that the Bled Agreement embodies a denial of former solemn declarations of the British Government assuring us protection. We are convinced that this statement was read to us with the only purpose of calming us. When we first came from Yugoslavia to Vittering camp in Carinthia, the Commandant, Major Barry, answered until the last moment our question, whether it was true that the Slovene young men were being returned to Marshal Tito, with (the following): "It is not true, they are being deported to a camp in Italy". The same persuasive reply was received from other British authorities at Klagenfurt who even threatened with reprisals all those who would divulge this rumor, yet in the meantime, sent 11,100 Slovene young men to Marshal Tito's Communists, who cruelly killed them without any previous sentence.

In the said announcement by the British Government it is stressed that there will be no compulsory repatriation of persons other than those who are in the British legal opinion shown to have wilfully and actively collaborated with the enemy. The authentic interpretation of the said 'opinion' is not known to us. We know however from the experience that all the British Commissions who have screened us up to now, reproached every professor or any official who kept his position during the war with collaboration. Therefore we are legitimately

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afraid that as a consequence of the Bled Agreement the Yugoslav DPs in the Occupation Zone of Germany and Austria have been left at discretion of the Marshal Tito's Government.

Before finishing this appeal to you, Excellency, we would like to explain to you one thing more. You will certainly wonder why we did not sign the above memorandum and why we dared not to post it in Germany or in Austria. Please, be aware that the DPs are the people who have had so many experiences that we can by no means run this risk. It is clear to us that in that case the memorandum would be known to the Communist agent, acting for the present Yugoslav Government, sooner than to you! The consequences that might be taken against us would no doubt be fatal. Taking this into account you will, we firmly believe, forgive us and examine with understanding our request.

We who have fled before Communism admired during the war the Western Allies and put all our hopes on their victory. Now we appeal to you, Excellency, as one of the great representatives of Western culture, with the request for assistance. The Slovene DPs are firmly convinced that we shall not be choate! in our confidence.

Believe us, Excellency, respectfully and faithfully.

Yours

SLOVENE DISPLACED PERSONS

IN BRITISH ZONE GERMANY AND AUSTRIA.

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